

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Prince George County Courthouse Historic District (VDHR file # 074-5013)
other names/site number _____

2. Location Prince George, Virginia

street & number 6400 Courthouse Road not for publication
city or town Prince George vicinity
state Virginia code VA county Prince George code 149 Zip 23875

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide _____ locally. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official _____ Date

Virginia Department of Historic Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined eligible for the
National Register

_____ See continuation sheet.

_____ determined not eligible for the National Register

_____ removed from the National Register

_____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park ServicePrince George County Courthouse Historic District
Prince George County, Va**5. Classification****Ownership of Property** (Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)
☒ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>11</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>14</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions** (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Government</u>	Sub: <u>courthouse</u>
<u>Government</u>	<u>government office</u>
<u>Government</u>	<u>correctional facility</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>single dwelling</u>
<u>Commerce/Trade</u>	<u>store</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>secondary structure</u>
<u>Agriculture/Subsistence</u>	<u>storage</u>
<u>Recreation and Culture</u>	<u>monument/marker</u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>Government</u>	Sub: <u>courthouse</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>library</u>
<u>Government</u>	<u>government office</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>single dwelling</u>
<u>Vacant/Not In Use</u>	
<u>Other</u>	<u>storage</u>
<u>Domestic</u>	<u>secondary structure</u>
<u>Recreation and Culture</u>	<u>monument/marker</u>

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)Greek Revival, Craftsman/Bungalow, Victorian,

_____**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)foundation CONCRETE, BRICK,
roof STONE: slate, granite, METAL: tin, ASPHALT
walls BRICK, WOOD: plywood/particle board, weatherboard,
GLASS, SYNTHETICS/vinyl,
other METAL: cast iron
_____**Narrative Description** (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☒ x A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.
-

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Prince George County Courthouse Historic District
Prince George County, Va

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Government/Politics

Period of Significance 1870-1952

Significant Dates 1870, 1873, 1883, 1921, 1929,
1935

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder F.L. Leavenworth, Architect
J. Chappell, Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

____ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

____ previously listed in the National Register

_____ previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

 X State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

— Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 18

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

1 18 296 916 4121656 2 18 297013 4121626

3 18 297006 4121568 4 18 297020 4121493

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

U. S. Department of the Interior
National Park ServicePrince George County Courthouse Historic District
Prince George County, Va**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Christina M. WilesOrganization: Virginia Department of Historic Resources date May 24, 2002street & number: 2801 Kensington Avenue telephone (804) 367-2323city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23221

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Prince George Countystreet & number 6400 Courthouse Road telephone _____city or town Prince George state VA zip code 23875

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Prince George County Courthouse
Prince George County, Virginia

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7. Summary Description:

Summary Paragraph

The Prince George County Courthouse Historic District is located on both sides of a sharp northward bend of the historic east-west State Route 106 in Prince George County, Virginia. Comprised of eleven contributing buildings, two noncontributing buildings and three contributing objects, the boundaries of the district are defined by these closely grouped resources, which form the historic core of the Prince George County seat. The county court buildings stand on the north side of the road and privately owned buildings on the south. The district boundary edge is defined by the small commercial village of modern, non-contributing buildings and rural land. The early stages of the village's formation began in the 1870s and continued into the twentieth century. The Colonial Revival-style county court complex features the 1883 courthouse, 1900 clerk's office, the circa 1900 jail and three mid twentieth century Colonial Revival-style office buildings. A Craftsman-style dwelling was adapted for office use and added to the courts complex in the 1970s. Memorials commemorating the Civil War, World Wars I and II, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars are located on the courthouse green. The privately-owned district resources include: the circa 1870 F.L. Buren Store, the circa 1870 Victorian Buren residence, two contributing outbuildings, and one noncontributing outbuilding.

Inventory and Architectural Descriptions

The buildings and objects in the district are discussed in two sections, the historic county courts complex and the privately-owned buildings. The entries include the current use, historic use, and approximate date of construction.

1. Historic County Courts Administration Building (former courthouse) - 1883

The earliest building in the present Prince George County Courts Complex was the 1883 courthouse. Not used as a courthouse since 1991, the building now houses the offices of the county administration. It was constructed to reflect the "temple-form" of courthouse architecture, but according to John and Margaret Peters in *Virginia's Historic Couthouses* the "temple form" predominated beginning around the 1800s and well into the 1840s. The temple-form is defined as a rectangular structure with a low-pitched, gable-end roof, which may have a pediment or portico.¹ The Prince George County Courthouse contains elements of the temple form, characteristic of the

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antebellum Virginia courthouses. The courthouse contains elements of the temple-form and is reminiscent of the Jeffersonian style, but because of its Reconstruction period date, it is more properly classified as an early example of the Colonial Revival style.

The courthouse is rectangular in plan with a rectangular rear addition. It is a two-story, brick building of five-course American bond, three bays wide and three bays deep. The courthouse has a low-pitched, front-gable roof with cornice returns on each end. Four interior end chimneys crown the standing seam metal roof.

In 1929, a one-story, brick arcade replaced a small, one-bay, flat-roofed entrance porch. The arcade runs along the principal elevation and has concrete paving supported by a brick foundation. The L-shaped arcade connects the courthouse to the clerk's office. The main recessed, double-door entrance is flanked by six-paned side lights and topped by a three-pane glazed transom which is recessed and surrounded by molded panels. Two windows, formerly with six-over-six sash, flank the entrance. All the windows on the first story have been truncated to accommodate the dropped ceiling on the interior. The original six-over-six windows have been replaced with six pane, single sash windows below solid wooden panels. The original second-story windows have six-over-six sashes. The openings on both the first and second stories, are topped with flat wood lintels. A circular vent is located in the center of each end gable.

A one-story, stretcher-bond brick addition with a hipped, standing-seam metal roof, is located on the north elevation of the courthouse centered between two windows in the first story. The rear elevation of the addition has a side entrance with a paneled door accessed by a stair.

The Work Projects Administration documented the interior arrangement of rooms during the late 1930s and early 1940s. The first floor of the courthouse was described as having a central hallway with two fourteen-by-twenty-by-ten commonwealth's attorney offices, two twelve-by-fourteen-by-ten trial judge offices and a small courtroom located in the rear of the building. The county's circuit courtroom was on the second floor.

Presently, the interior of the courthouse has been altered to house the administrative offices of Prince George County. The first floor has a central hallway lined with the offices of the deputy clerk of the court, the county administrator, zoning administrator and the county planner. Terrazzo covers the floors. There are modern hung ceilings. The original doorframes remain, but

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some more recent partitions have been added to create additional offices.

On the second floor, the courtroom remains moderately intact. It was remodeled during the 1950s. The courtroom is oriented east-west, with a central aisle flanked by pew-like benches. The room contains a jury box with chairs and a paneled judge's bench flanked on either side by prosecution and defense stands. The walls behind the bench are covered in wood paneling and are hung with oil paintings of former county clerks and sheriffs. Located to the south of the courtroom are the former judge's chamber and jury room. The floors of the courtroom are covered in tile and carpet. The ceilings retain their original height, but have been covered with soundproof paneling. A cornice and chair rail adorn the walls of the courtroom.

2. Former Clerk's Office (Prince George Library) - 1900

The Colonial Revival-style former clerk's office constructed in 1900, has served as the Prince George Library, a branch of the Appomattox Regional Library, since 1991. The county clerks occupied the building until 1990. Two additions on the north elevation have altered the original square form of the building. Giving it an L-shaped plan. The building is one-story high, two-bay wide, and three-bay deep of five course american-bond brick masonry. Three elevations of the building have a water table and belt course while a corbelled brick cornice surrounds three sides of the slate, gable-on-hip roof. There is an interior end, chimney with a corbelled cap and an interior chimney that was constructed with the first addition. A one-story porch was located on the east (principal) elevation. It was replaced by the present arcade. The front elevation contains a side entrance flanked on the south (right) by one, two-over-two double-hung window with a segmental brick arch. A solid, metal door a feature of the fireproof clerk's office, remains hinged to the door.

The first addition on the north elevation is rectangular in form and recessed from the main building's principal elevation. The addition was centered on the north elevation of the main building, but a second addition was attached to the north elevation of the first addition, and the north elevation of the main building, to form the present L-shaped plan. The first addition is six-course american bond brick masonry. Slate covers the gable-on-hip roof. The addition has two windows, one on the west elevation and the other on the north with fifteen panes. The windows have five rows of three panes are hinged to open as both hopper and awning windows.

The second addition is rectangular and recessed back from the west elevation of the first addition, but aligned with the east elevations of the first addition and main building. It has six

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course common bond, rests on a full basement, topped with a slate, side-gable roof and crowned by one exterior end chimney. The west elevation of the second addition contains two, twelve-paned windows with brick sills, that open like the windows in the first addition. There is a covered stair located on the rear of this addition, which leads to the basement.

On the interior, the building was modified to accommodate the library. Shelving was added to the walls, carpeting covers the floor and the ceiling has been lowered. The original plastered walls and metal-shuttered windows still remain. The metal door, which leads into the former vault, is present as well.

3. Commissioner of the Revenue and Treasurer's Office - 1935

This office building was constructed in 1935 and formerly housed the treasurer, commissioner of the revenue, county agricultural agent, superintendent and local public welfare board, county health unit, and sheriff. Presently, the treasurer and commissioner of revenue occupy the building. It is a one-and-a-half story, rectangular building, three bays wide and eleven bays deep. The building has walls of six-course american bond and rests on a poured concrete foundation. The principal (south) elevation was constructed to resemble the principal elevation of the courthouse with a front-gable roof and cornice returns. Standing seam metal covers the roof and the gable dormers. The building has an interior chimney located towards the east side of the building. An arcade, which mirrors the arcade of the Courthouse and Clerk's Office, fronts this elevation as well.

The principal elevation's central paneled door is framed with side lights and a glazed transom. The windows in the first story are all six-over-six sash with arched lintels. Located in the gable, is a twelve-paned window, repeating the form of the transom above the door. Above the window in the gable, is a stone with the date "1935." On the rear elevation are poured concrete steps leading to a one-story porch that shelters the door. The porch has a flat roof supported by posts. The porch closely resembles the former front porch of the courthouse.

The interior of the office building features a central hall with offices lining either side. The hall is divided into halves by a glazed double-door. The southern half of the building houses the commissioner of the revenue and the northern half houses the treasurer. The offices are accessed through glazed doors with transoms. The treasurer's office has three bank-like windows on the eastern wall. A stair leads to a small room on the second floor used as a break room. Doors on either side of the room lead to unfinished space used for storage.

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4. Assessor's Office – circa 1921

The Craftsman style building is located to the west of the courthouse. It was a dwelling for many years, but was purchased by Prince George County from Eleanor Buren in 1977. It is a one-and-a-half story bungalow over a full basement. Running bond masonry covers the exterior of the first story and vinyl siding surrounds the dormers and covers the side gables of the roof. The overhanging, gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles and joins the roof of the first-story porch with a break in slope. The porch is supported on brick piers and wooden posts. It covers a central door flanked by double windows. The windows in the first story have six-over-six sashes with arched lintels. There is one exterior end chimney on the east elevation and two interior end chimneys on the north elevation. The front elevation features a gable dormer with three six-over-six sash windows. Modifications to the exterior include a stair leading to the upper floor, a small, square, vinyl-sided addition to the rear elevation, and an aluminum clad handicap ramp.

The interior of the building has been modified to accommodate the offices of the county assessors. The four-room plan was not drastically altered. The original paneled doors, doorways and windows remain with the surrounding molded trim intact. Located in the large meeting room is a brick fireplace and wooden mantle. The original stair, with a decorative, square newel typical of the Craftsman style, leads to the second floor. The second floor retains its original plan and consists of three offices occupying former bedrooms.

5. Assessor's Office Outbuilding – circa 1921

The outbuilding is located northwest of the assessors office, in the far corner of the yard area. The building rests on a poured concrete foundation. It is one story and sided with clapboards. The front-gable roof is covered in standing seam metal. There is one board and batten door on the east elevation. The building is currently used for storage.

6. Sixth District Court Service Unit/Food Bank Building - noncontributing

This noncontributing building is located north of the Assessor's Office. The frame, temporary structure with a rectangular plan is one story high, five bays wide and two bays deep. It has a gable roof covered in asphalt shingles. It is covered in vertical board and has two porches leading to the doors. The interior is divided into offices.

7. Former Jail now the County Engineer/Utility and Building Inspector Building – early

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20th century

Constructed between 1900 and 1923, and located north of the courthouse is the former jail. The jail was abandoned during World War II and was modified to accommodate offices for the volunteer fire department and police dispatcher in 1957. Presently, the offices of the county engineer/utility and building inspector occupy the building. The one-story, five-course common bond, brick building has a rectangular plan, six bays across and four bays deep. There are central doors on both the front and rear elevations covered by shed hoods. The windows have one-over-one sash with panels filling the top portions. Above the windows are concrete filled, rectangular openings, which could have served as ventilation while the building was used as a jail. It has a standing seam metal gable roof with vinyl sided gables that replaced a flat roof. A concrete block addition was added to the west elevation and completes the building's rectangular shape.

The interior of the building has been divided into two separate offices entered through doors on the front and rear elevations. The County Engineer and Utilities offices occupy the front and the Building Inspector occupies the rear. No remnants of the jail survive. The offices are divided by thin, particle board partition walls and there is a hung ceiling.

8. Fire Services Building – circa 1940

The Fire Services Building is a one-story stretcher bond, brick building, resting on a poured concrete foundation. It is four bays wide and one bay deep with a gable roof covered in standing seam metal. An exterior end chimney crowns the roof. The only entrance is located on the west elevation and was added to replace the former entrance at the rear of the building. Three fixed sash windows were added as well. The east elevation was originally the entrance to the building. The door has been turned into a series of mailboxes for the volunteer fire fighters. There is a small cross gable above the door. The original windows have eight-over-eight sash. The interior is divided into two offices. The walls have been dry-walled and the ceiling is hung.

9. World Wars I and II Memorial

The World Wars I and II Memorial is located to the south (front) of the courthouse. It features granite and resembles a funerary headstone atop an ashlar base. The inscription on the southern side of the stone reads "In Memoriam to those who made the supreme sacrifice in the services of our country in World Wars I and II from Prince George County, Virginia." Listed below the inscription, are the names of the men who died in the wars.

10. Confederate Soldiers Monument

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To the west of the World Wars Monument is the Confederate Soldiers Monument. This centrally placed, monument is a large, cut granite obelisk surrounded by smaller granite obelisks connected by metal rails which enclose the small area around it. The main obelisk rests on a granite platform and base. It is constructed from cut blocks of granite ashlar. From the base of the obelisk a rectangular block projects, upon which is inscribed "Erected by the Prince George Chapter U.D.C. to the memory of Confederate soldiers of Prince George County that their heroic deeds, sublime sacrifice and undying devotion to duty and country may never be forgotten." Three cannonballs rest atop the block.

11. Description of the Korean and Vietnam Wars Memorial

Located to the west of the Confederate Soldiers Memorial is the Korean and Vietnam Wars Memorial. It is carved from cut granite and also resembles a funerary headstone atop a granite ashlar base. The inscription on the southern side of the stone reads "In memory of those who made supreme sacrifice in military service to their country from Prince George County." Listed below the inscription are the names of the men who died in the wars.

12. F.L Buren Store – circa 1870

Buren Store is a two-story, five-course american bond brick building resting on a full basement, three bays wide and two bays deep. It has a pyramidal roof covered in standing seam metal with a central chimney in the apex. The principal (north) elevation contains a central door flanked by storefront windows. These windows were a later addition as indicated by changes in the brickwork. Above the storefront window is a sign, which reads "F.L. Buren Gen. Mdse" centered between two Coca-Cola logos. There are also entrances located on the east (side) and rear elevations. The second story has two six-over-six, double-hung sash windows with wood frames and sills. There is also a painted sign covering the first story of the west elevation which reads, "F.L. Buren Gen. Mdse." with a Pepsi logo below.

On the first floor of the interior is one room with early shelving remaining on the back walls and ghosts of former shelves behind the modern shelves on the side walls. Evidence of vertical floor to ceiling shelf supports can be seen on the ceiling joists. A stair located in the right rear corner of the room leads to the basement and second floor. There is a scuttle hole for a former winch directly to the right of the stair and in front of the rear door equipped with iron pintels, strap hinges and a pull ring.

The second floor plan is divided into three rooms: one large rear room with the stair and two

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front rooms. The front rooms are divided by a vertical board partition wall, and were probably used as offices. They have finished walls of lath and plaster and mopboards at the base. The larger rear room was used for storage, indicated by the unfinished walls and the hanging shelves. The shelves were constructed from packing crates and "A.B. Temple Prince George Va" is written on the undersides. A.B. Temple of Temple and Brothers, was a former owner of the store.²

13. Buren Residence – circa 1870

The residence is a Victorian T-shaped, two-story frame building three bays wide and one bay deep. It is topped with a patterned slate roof supported by a boxed cornice with brackets. There are two interior chimneys with corbelling and arches. A porch runs the length of the wing. Queen Anne-style posts support the porch and decorative turned balusters support the rail. The cornice of the porch contains dentils and the roof is covered in standing seam metal. The windows are paired with one-over-one sashes surrounded by decorative wood frames. The front door and windows in the first story have stained glass transoms. One window is fronted by a small rail with turned balusters and covered by a small, bracket-supported shed roof. There is a four-paned diamond-shaped window in the gable. An addition and screened porch were constructed on the rear, and give the building its present T-shaped plan.

On the interior, the original center passage plan has been altered by an addition to the rear elevation. The passage is flanked by three rooms, which each have fireplaces and decorative mantels. The front east room (parlor) has the most elaborate mantel of tan, brown and black marble with decorative star-shaped designs. The mantel in the west room is molded metal with intricate flower designs. The mantel in the rear east room is carved wood and identical to the mantel on the second-floor front east room. There is a two-story addition on the rear elevation, which houses the kitchen on the first floor. A stair in the kitchen leads to the second story room. A bathroom was added to the west room. The doors and windows have decorative molding with carved flowers in the cornerblocks and mopboards along the floor. A stair with a decorative square newel post adorned with carved bull's eyes leads to the second floor from the hall.

The second-floor plan is identical to the plan on the first floor. The hall leads to three rooms, two of which have ornamented wooden mantels, but the rear east room fireplace has been covered with plaster. There is a bathroom and a bedroom in the second story of the addition. The bedroom in the addition is entered through the rear east room or the stair from the kitchen.

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14. Outbuildings – late 19th century and early 20th century

There are three outbuildings located south of the Buren residence. The one noncontributing building is a one-story, metal shed with a metal roof located to the southeast of the residence. The two contributing outbuildings are located to the south and southwest of the residence. The building located to the south is one story, covered in weatherboards with a gable roof. There is a solid door on the front elevation. The outbuilding located to the southwest is one story, with one solid door on the front elevation. It is covered in weatherboards and has a gable-front roof covered in standing seam metal. There is one exterior end chimney.

Integrity

Despite some exterior alterations and additions and interior modifications, the integrity of the Prince George Courthouse Historic District remains. The public and private buildings define the historic character of the courthouse village by retaining much of their exterior historic materials, workmanship and design. The location and setting of the district has not changed, nor has the feeling and association of the district, which symbolizes the center of the local government of Prince George County.

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8. Statement of Significance

Summary Statement of Significance

The Prince George County Courthouse Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A because it has been the location of the county seat since 1810, the construction site of the 1883 courthouse, and continues to be used by the county government. Therefore, the district represents the government/politics area of significance under Criterion A. The importance of the courthouse to Prince George county can be traced to the very beginnings of the county. In 1702, during the American Revolution, the British destroyed the first courthouse and the county records. After meeting in residences and temporary courthouses, it was not until 1810, that a permanent building was erected to serve as the county seat. Union troops destroyed that courthouse in 1864 along with the county records. It was through the perseverance of the people of Prince George county and the generosity of local residents that a temporary courthouse was constructed in 1867 to house the county seat. Due to the disorder of Reconstruction, the present courthouse was not constructed for another fifteen years.

Historic Context

The Virginia Courthouse

The county courthouse of Virginia not only served as the center of the local government, but played important roles in the political, social and economical aspects of a community as well. Monthly meetings of court, primarily for the administrative business of a county, also provided regular opportunities for the gathering of local residents. Court days in a rural community drew those with official business, but also voters, buyers, sellers, or traders of crops, horses, dry goods as well as those who wished to be entertained by speeches.³ The county seat provided a gathering place for a rural community to engage in the American exercise of self-government.

The location of the county seat was important on many levels, mainly for political and financial reasons, and differences of opinion were hotly contested.⁴ Citizens of a community wanted the courthouse located centrally and easily accessible by road to enable all residents of the county the ability to attend these monthly community gatherings. In the early years of the country, the

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courthouse served as the only direct link between the American people and their government.

The Early Courthouses of Prince George County

In its early years, Prince George County was the southern part of the larger Charles City Shire, which was divided by the waters of the James River. The General Assembly authorized the holding of monthly courts in 1623 for the area, which included what would become Charles City, Prince George County, and Elizabeth City.⁵ It was not until 1634, that Prince George County was officially decreed part of the Charles City Shire, which included all of the land north of the James City line south of the James River, and by the Henrico Shire north of the River.⁶ The administrative seat of the Shire was Charles City Point, which later became Hopewell,⁷ but according to William Gaines, by 1639 court was meeting north of the river at Westover plantation.⁸

The division of the Shire by the James River upset many of the southern inhabitants, who were forced to cross the James River to attend church and sessions of court. Due to the inconvenience and the mounting friction between the inhabitants on the north and south sides of the river, the June 1655 session of court authorized alternate sessions to be held at Westover, north of the river, and at Flowerdew Hundred, south of the river⁹. The holding of alternate courts did not receive legislative approval until March of 1657.¹⁰

After the approval of alternate courts, the courts south of the river were held at Merchant's Hope Church instead of Flowerdew Hundred. In August of 1658 Captain Richard Tye, a member of the court, donated one-half acre at Merchant's Hope on which a courthouse and jail were constructed by Thomas Tanner.¹¹ For the next four years, court was alternatively held at Merchant's Hope and Westover. In 1662, the General Assembly ordered that the public buildings at Merchant's Hope be sold. The county seat of the Charles City Shire returned to the north side of the river.

In 1700 the inhabitants of the southern part of the Shire formally protested the northern location of the courthouse. The General Assembly recognized the insurmountable inconvenience and declared the lands of Charles City Shire south of the James River to be Prince George County in August of 1702. Named after Prince George of Denmark the consort of England's Queen Anne, the county was officially established in July of 1703.¹²

Due to the loss of the county records during the American Revolution, the exact location of the first Prince George County Courthouse is unknown. According to many sources, the courts were resumed at the former site of Merchant's Hope Church along Chappall's Creek, east of Powell Creek, until

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1714.¹³ In September of 1726, court was moved to “Fitzgerald’s,” near Bailey’s Creek and the “Frog Hole Bridge,” presently located within the city limits of Hopewell.¹⁴ Many believe the county seat remained in this location until 1781.¹⁵ In the Spring of 1781, British troops destroyed the county courthouse, jail, and tavern along with most records of the court.¹⁶

The location of the court at Bailey’s Creek proved unsatisfactory for many of Prince George’s inhabitants. The former location was within three miles of the county line on the north side instead of a more central location. In June of 1784, the citizens of Prince George petitioned the General Assembly for the removal of the county seat to a better location.¹⁷ In October of 1784, the General Assembly issued an act, which stated that the courthouse was located in an inconvenient location and that the “justices of Prince George shall fix upon a place and erect the necessary buildings, and when erected, courts shall be held.”¹⁸ The justices of Prince George erected a courthouse and other public buildings along the Stage Road (presently S. R. 106), five miles east of Petersburg, just north of the Blackwater River, near the center of the county.¹⁹ This location is the present site of the courthouse village.

In 1810, a new courthouse was erected which serviced the county throughout the antebellum period.²⁰ In June of 1864 Union troops burned and looted the courthouse of all its contents during the siege of Petersburg. Timothy Rives, who later became judge of the county court, discovered a bound volume of early county records from February 9, 1713 to May 14, 1728 and some records from 1711.²¹ These are the only early records from that period that remain.

Court in Prince George County after the Civil War

The aftermath of the Civil War dramatically altered local life and government in Virginia with changes to the entire political system.²² After the reign of military law, professional judges, trained and practiced in the law, and new groups of county officers replaced former justices of the peace. The court lost most of its administrative authority to a newly created Board of Supervisors.²³ Despite these changes to the local governmental structure, postwar court days continued to serve as a political focal points and the best times to buy, sell, trade and socialize into the twentieth century.²⁴

After the war, the county found itself not only devastated, but without a courthouse. On August 28, 1865 Governor Pierpont of Virginia described the “courthouse of the county of Prince George, and all buildings in which court are to be held, were destroyed and are not now rebuilt or repaired.” He declared that the “county courts are to be held at the home of Albert J. Bishop until suitable

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buildings may be erected in which to hold said courts at the site of the courthouse of said county.”²⁵ For two years the sessions of the county court were held in the home of Bishop, a citizen of Prince George County.

During the June term of 1868, the justices of the court accepted a proposal made by Bishop to erect a “suitable building for a court house on his premises and to donate the same to the court aforesaid, including two acres of land to be used as a site for the said court house and for other public purposes.” On the allotted land located on the south side of the Quaker road, the deed stated that there “will be erected a court house, clerk’s office and jail.”²⁶ According to the Court Order Book in July of 1868, Noel J. Relph offered to construct a courthouse on his premises near the site of the old courthouse, but the court refused and accepted Bishop’s offer.²⁷ Peter P. Buttee, Theodore H. Daniel, and Robert Gilliam were appointed by an order of the court commissioners on September 10, 1868 to fix on a site for the erection of a temporary courthouse on Bishop’s land.²⁸ Jebb Warmack proposed to purchase the bricks at the site of the county courthouse, and the court decided to sell the bricks at three dollars per thousand.²⁹

On October 8, 1868, John Tinsley erected a one-and-a-half story, thirty-six-by-twenty building at the site of the old courthouse along the Stage Road at his own cost. Tinsley offered the county usage of this building to hold sessions of court. The county refused his offer on account of the contract with Bishop to erect a courthouse and a clerk’s office “free of charge on a site selected by the court, where buildings are in a forward state of completion.”³⁰ The court later agreed to Tinsley’s offer and on December 10, 1868 courts were to held at the old courthouse site.³¹ The next entry in the order book gave John Tinsley a license for an ordinary at his residence. On January 4, 1869, the buildings Tinsley erected at the courthouse site were officially conveyed to the county for use.³²

On February 27, 1869, the “Courthouse Square,” at the site of the courthouse erected by Tinsley, was surveyed and recorded in the county deed book. Tinsley’s land formed the north, south and west boundaries and the Stage Road formed the east boundary of the four-and-one-quarter acre Square. The deed stated that the Square was the property of the county court “so long as it is accompanied as the site of the courthouse.” According to the deed, the title to the property would be conveyed back to John Tinsley when the court ceased to occupy the site.³³ In a deed dated August 12, 1869, it was recorded that the court of Prince George County paid one dollar for four-and-one-quarter acres for the “Courthouse Site on the Stage Road.”³⁴ For reasons unknown the land granted by Bishop was never used by the Prince George County Court. The court remained at the old courthouse site along the Old Stage Road, which is today Route 106.

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A New Courthouse for Prince George

On March 5, 1872, the Board of Supervisors ordered Richard C. Daniel, Rob Gilliams, and Robert Eppes to draw a plan and specifications for the erection of a clerk's office.³⁵ George E. Perkinson was awarded the contract to construct the brick clerk's office in April of 1873.³⁶ This was the first step towards a permanent seat for the county. According to an order book, in June of 1874, the old clerk's office was moved to the southeast corner of the courthouse.³⁷ A 1927 photograph however, shows a one story, brick building with two bays and a hip roof located directly west of the courthouse. The photograph indicates that the clerk's office was never moved.³⁸

It was not until 1882 that the court decided it was time to replace Tinsley's courthouse with the courthouse that stands today. On January 23, 1882, a committee of three was appointed by the Chairman of the Board to "confer with some builders as to the cost of building a courthouse for the county according to the plans submitted by F.P. Leavenworth, the county's surveyor."³⁹ It was not until June of 1882, that the Board "resolved that the two-story plan submitted by Leavenworth be adopted as the plan for the new courthouse on the present site in the center of the county." In September of the same year, J. Chappall was contracted to construct the new courthouse by June 1, 1883 and Leavenworth was appointed to oversee the construction. The Board also ordered the sale of the old courthouse by the Sheriff.⁴⁰

During construction in April of 1883, the Board ordered that the original plans be altered and that the "roof be changed from a hipped roof to a principal roof."⁴¹ The majority of the courthouse was finally completed and given to the Board on October 22, 1883. On the same date, Leavenworth was ordered to remodel the old clerk's office, and until completion, the Clerk's Office would be located in the west room of the first floor in the courthouse. W.D. Temple was also authorized to buy three stoves and pipes for the courtroom and the clerk's office.⁴² An order issued in January of 1884 authorized J.J. Cocke to buy "suitable walling for the court room."⁴³

Additions and Alterations

The Board ordered the clerk's office to be sold by the Sheriff in 1884.⁴⁴ In January of 1900, the Board decided to build a fireproof clerk's office "separate and apart from the courthouse." The Board accepted a plan by B.H. Smith Fireproof Construction Company for the new clerk's office.⁴⁵ The jail was probably constructed around this time. A plat drawing shows the building present in 1923.⁴⁶ The Confederate Soldiers Memorial was also constructed at the site during this time in

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1908.⁴⁷

The Board of Supervisors decided to alter and add to the courthouse and clerk's office in May of 1929. It appointed Fred A. Bishop as architect, to be paid eight percent commission of the total cost of the construction. Coopee Lai was awarded the contract for construction after he submitted the lowest bid for the additions and alterations.⁴⁸ Included in these alterations and additions in 1929, was the addition of the arcade. The arcade, unlike the porticos of the Colonial Revival style, serves as yet another testament to the architectural heritage of Virginia. The arcade reflects those on the early Colonial courthouses of the State.⁴⁹

The office building to the west of the courthouse was constructed in 1935 on the location of the old clerk's office to house the Treasurer, Commissioner of the Revenue, and the Sheriff. J.H. Defibaugh drew the plans for the office building, which was constructed to mirror the Classical elements of the courthouse using the Colonial Revival style popular at that time.⁵⁰ It was enlarged during the early 1940s.⁵¹ The Fire Services Building was constructed after 1935 and used as a coal bin for the furnaces in the court buildings. It was later modified and used as offices.

The County Assessors Building

The final addition to the county courts complex was the Craftsman style residence located directly west of the 1935 office building. It replaced a former building on the site circa 1921⁵² and served as the Buren residence until January of 1977. Eleanor Buren and Marie O'Connor sold the four-and-one-tenth-acre parcel with the building to Prince George County to be used as offices.⁵³

The Growth of the Courthouse Village

With the return of the court to the old courthouse site, the surrounding area began to develop during the 1870s and 1880s. The brick store and the frame dwelling across the Old Stage Road (S. R. 106) from the courthouse were built between 1870 and 1871.⁵⁴ Noel J. Relph, who owned the land during that time, was most likely the builder. The store, located along a main road, not only supplied the local community with goods, but travelers as well. In April of 1883 William D. Temple and Brothers, later owners of the store, received a license to operate an ordinary at a house in Prince George Courthouse from May 1883 to April 1884.⁵⁵ The ordinary was most likely the frame house that neighbored the store. Temple owned the frame dwelling from December of 1881 to March of 1883 when it was sold to Cornelius D. Tinsley.⁵⁶ Tinsley must have rented the dwelling after purchase to the Temple Brothers for a period of time. According to a deed in October of 1888 Andrew B. Temple purchased the dwelling neighboring the store

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from Tinsley.⁵⁷ The deed described the brick storehouse as the western boundary of the property and owned by W.D. Temple and Brothers, which was comprised of William and Andrew Temple.

The store and dwelling remained in ownership of the Temple Brothers until 1927. The Temple's property, which included the storehouse, dwelling, and the four and one tenth acre across Route 106, located to the west of the Courthouse was sold by Andrew Temple to James Thomas Williams.⁵⁸ Williams took over the store and operated his business there until his death in 1942.

J.T. Williams died in testate in 1942, and his property, including the frame dwelling, store, and four-and one tenth acres property located to the west of the courthouse went to his wife Lula and daughters Eleanor Buren and Marie O'Connor. Eleanor and her husband Francis L. Buren took over the mercantile business. The store closed in January of 1984 and continues to remain vacant.⁵⁹

A small community with a mixture of governmental, commercial, banking and residential buildings has grown around the district as well. The county courts complex itself has expanded, beginning in the mid-1970s with the construction of the Bland building. It was originally used as the general district court, but presently serves as the police station. A new courts building located north (behind) of the historic courthouse was constructed in 1989, and presently houses both circuit and general district courts. A human resources building, a school board office, and trailers were also added to the complex. Despite the construction of new court and office buildings, Prince George County continues to use its historic court buildings.

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¹ John O. and Margaret T. Peters, *Virginia's Historic Courthouses*, University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville and London, 1995, 34.

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² All information on the interior of the Buren Store was taken from Carrie A. Fellows, "Field Notes of F.L. Buren Genreal Merchandise, Prince George, VA," 16 April 1998, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Va.

³ Shepard E. Lee, "This Being Court Day/ Courthouses and Community Life in Rural Virginia," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 103, No. 4, published by the Virginia Historical Society, October 1995, 459.

⁴ Lee, 463.

⁵ Francis Earle Lutz, *The Prince George-Hopewell Story*, The Area Historical Committee, The William Byrd Press, Inc., Richmond, Virginia, 1957, 27.

⁶ Lutz, 28.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ William H. Gaines, Jr., "Courthouses of Charles City and Prince George Counties/Charles City County South of the James was Divided into Twenty-Two Counties," *Virginia Cavalcade*, Summer 1968, 6.

⁹ Lutz, 37.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Gaines, 6.

¹² Lutz, 53.

¹³ *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, published by the Virginia Historical Society, Vol. IV, House of the Society Printer William Ellis Jones, Richmond, Virginia, June 1897, 273.

¹⁴ Ibid.

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¹⁵ *Military Map of a Section of the County Contiguous to Petersburg*, William H. Brodnar, Topographic Engineer, 1864, from the Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

¹⁶ Gaines, 9.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Hening, William Waller, *The Statutes at Large Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619*, Vol. XI, George Cochran, editor, Richmond, 1823, reprinted by Whitett and Shepperson, Richmond, VA, 1969, 432.

¹⁹ Gaines, 10.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Lutz, 191.

²² Lee, 469.

²³ "No. 75 Prince George County (Prince George Courthouse)," *Inventory of County Archives of Virginia*, prepared by the Historical Records Survey of Virginia Division of Community Service Programs Work Projects Administration, sponsored by the Virginia Conservation Commission, Richmond, VA, 1941, 39.

²⁴ Lee, 469.

²⁵ Order Book 1856-1867, Vol. 1, Prince George County Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA, 1.

²⁶ Deed Book, 28, Prince George County Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA, 108.

²⁷ Order Book 1867-1871, Vol. 2, Prince George County Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA, 78.

²⁸ Order Book 1867-71, 96-7.

²⁹ Ibid.

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³⁰ Order Book 1867-1871, Prince George County Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA, 103.

³¹ Order Book 1867-1871, Vol. 2, December 10, 1868, Prince George County Clerk's Office, Prince George County, VA.

³² Order Book 1867-1871, Vol. 2, 123.

³³ Deed Book 28, Prince George County Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA, 212-13.

³⁴ Deed Book 28, 288.

³⁵ Board of Supervisors Order Book 1870-1895, Vol. 1, Prince George County Deputy Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA, March 5, 1872.

³⁶ Board of Supervisors Order Book Vol. 1, April 25, 1873.

³⁷ Board of Supervisors Order Book Vol. 1, June 1, 1874.

³⁸ Photograph of the Prince George County Courthouse in 1927, Virginia Department of Historic Resources file 074-0004, copy of a Library of Virginia photograph.

³⁹ Board of Supervisors Order Book Vol. 1, January 23, 1882.

⁴⁰ Board of Supervisors Order Book Vol. 1, September 9, 1882.

⁴¹ Board of Supervisors Order Book Vol. 1, April 23, 1883.

⁴² Board of Supervisors Order Book Vol. 1, October 22, 1883.

⁴³ Board of Supervisors Order Book Vol. 1, January 28, 1884.

⁴⁴ Board of Supervisors Order Book Vol. 1, April 28, 1884.

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⁴⁵ Board of Supervisors Order Book, Vol. 2, 1895-1903, Prince George County Deputy Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA, 159.

⁴⁶ Plat Book 7, Prince George County Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA, 35.

⁴⁷ Sarah Shields Driggs with John L. Orrock, *Save Outdoor Sculpture! A Survey of Sculpture in Virginia*, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Richmond, 1996, 24.

⁴⁸ Board of Supervisors Order Book Vol. 5, 1921-31, Prince George County Deputy Clerk's Office, Prince George County, VA, 365.

⁴⁹ Peters, 138.

⁵⁰ Board of Supervisors Order Book Vol. 6 1931-1937, Prince George County Deputy Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA, 228.

⁵¹ No. 75 Prince George County (Prince George Courthouse), 53

⁵² Land Book 1921, Prince George County Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA.

⁵³ Deed Book 229, Prince George County Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA, 165.

⁵⁴ Land Book 1866-71, Prince George County Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA.

⁵⁵ Order Book 6 1882-1886, Prince George County Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA, 42.

⁵⁶ Deed Book 33, Prince George County Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA, 406.

⁵⁷ Deed Book 36, Prince George County Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA, 376.

⁵⁸ Deed Book 90, Prince George County Clerk's Office, Prince George, VA, 221.

⁵⁹ "Prince George Village," *Petersburg Progress-Index*, Sunday, 15 April 1984, Maude

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UTM REFERENCES (CONTINUED)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing		
5	<u>18</u>	<u>296 946</u>	4121508	6	<u>18</u>	<u>296292</u>	<u>4121543</u>
7	<u>18</u>	<u>296962</u>	<u>4121543</u>				

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Prince George County Courthouse Historic District are described with reference to Prince George County Tax Map 24. The district boundary begins at the southern side of the intersection of Administration Drive and S.R. 106 (Courthouse Road) in tax parcel 5-14. The boundary follows Administration Drive and runs between the Assessor's Office outbuilding and the oak trees to join the southern side of Administration Drive. The northern boundary follows the southern edge of Administration Drive, which runs through tax parcel 5-

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15. It meets S.R. 106 and follows the southern side of the road north until it joins the eastern boundary of parcel A-23. The eastern boundary of parcel A-23 forms the eastern boundary of the district and includes all of the property within parcel A-23. The southern boundary of parcel A-23 defines the southern end of the district. The southern parcel edge of A-23 continues as a defining edge across parcel A-21. The remaining property in parcel A-21 is not included in the district. The western boundary of parcel A-21 defines the western boundary of the district and runs north to S.R. 106. The boundary then follows the northern side of S.R. 106 until it intersects with Administration Drive and encloses the district. The boundaries of the nominated historic district are depicted on the tax map that accompanies the nomination.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the nominated historic district include the historic core of the village of Prince George along State Route 106 in Prince George, Virginia. Resources that do not contribute have been excluded.

All photographs of:
Prince George County Courthouse Historic District
Prince George County, VA
VDHR file # 074-5013

Date: June 2002

View of: Historic County Courts Administration Building, Prince George Library,
Commissioner of the Revenue and Treasurer's Office, the World Wars I and II Memorial,
Confederate Soldiers Memorial, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars Memorial

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Neg No.: 19913
Photo 1 of 10

Date: June 2002
View of: Historic County Courts Administration Building
Neg No.: 19913
Photo: 2 of 10

Date: June 2002
View of: Commissioner of the Revenue and Treasurer's Office
Neg No: 19913
Photo: 3 of 10

Date: June 2002
View of: Former Jail now the County Engineer/Utility and Building Inspector Office
Neg No: 19913
Photo: 4 of 10

Date: June 2002
View of: Side elevations of Assessor's Office and rear elevation of outbuilding
Neg No.: 19913
Photo: 5 of 10

Date: June 2002
View of: Confederate Soldiers Monument
Neg No.: 19913
Photo: 6 of 10

Date: June 2002
View of: World Wars I and II Memorial
Neg No: 19971
Photo: 7 of 10

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Date: June 2002
View of: F.L. Buren Store
Neg No.: 19971
Photo: 8 of 10

Date: June 2002
View of: Side and Rear Elevation of the Buren Residence
Neg No: 19971
Photo: 9 of 10

Date: June 2002
View of: Buren Residence
Neg No: 19913
Photo: 10 of 10